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REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery

Report of the Secretary-General

Requests by the Commission and Sub-Commission

1. In its resolution 1996/61 adopted on 23 April 1996, the Commission on Human Rights requested the Secretary-General to transmit to all Governments its appeal for contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery and commended the Board of Trustees for its efforts to remedy the continuing difficult financial situation of the Fund, which was due to a lack of contributions. The Commission invited the Secretary-General to examine the feasibility of alignment and harmonization of the procedures and support mechanisms of the Fund with other existing procedures and mechanisms and to report on this matter to the Commission at its fifty-third session.

2. In its previous resolution, 1995/27 of 3 March 1995, the Commission had expressed regret that as a result of the financial situation of the Fund, owing to a lack of contributions, the Board of Trustees had only been able to meet once since it was appointed by the Secretary-General in 1993 and appealed to all Governments, organizations and individuals in a position to do so to respond favourably to requests for contributions to the Fund, if possible on a regular basis. The Commission commended the Board of Trustees on its concern about the limited assets of the Fund, demonstrated by its judicious measures to minimize administrative expenses. It encouraged the Sub-Commission to continue considering the development of systematic fund-raising methods and to recommend a set of measures, including that already proposed, to promote increased contributions.

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3. In its resolution 1996/18 of 29 August 1996, the Sub-Commission suggested that the Secretary-General consider entrusting the mandate of the Board of Trustees to the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, having regard to the difficulties mentioned above and with a view to greater efficiency and reduction in operating expenses. The Sub-Commission also invited a representative of the Fund to participate in the Working Group at its twenty-second session. Additionally, it urged all Governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations, private institutions and individuals to respond favourably to requests for contributions to the Fund.

4. In view of the fact that recommendations by the Board and decisions by the Secretary-General have to be made well in advance of the meeting of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery so that selected representatives of non-governmental organizations or victims of contemporary forms of slavery can participate in the meeting of the Working Group, a transfer of the mandate of the Board to the Working Group would not have proved feasible.

5. In its previous resolution, 1995/15 of 18 August 1995, the Sub-Commission had requested the Secretary-General to publicize the establishment and function of the Fund so as to increase general awareness of its existence. It also requested the Secretary-General to study ways and means to draw the attention of potential donors - both public and private - to the important role played by the Fund. It recommended that, in order to better reflect the aims of the Fund, the Board of Trustees consider renaming the Fund.

Board of Trustees of the Fund: sessions, reports and renewal of the membership

6. The first and second sessions of the Board of Trustees were held at Geneva from 22 to 26 March 1993 and from 28 August to 1 September 1995, respectively. The reports of the sessions are contained in documents E/CN.4/1996/85 and E/CN.4/1996/86.

7. On 9 December 1996, the High Commissioner for Human Rights sent a letter to the outgoing members, Mrs. Eugenia Zamora Chavarria and Mr. Michel Bonnet, to thank them for their excellent contribution to the work of the Board of Trustees.

8. The High Commissioner also sent a letter to the new members of the Board of Trustees and to the members whose mandate has been extended. The High Commissioner indicated that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/122 and paragraph 3 of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1992/46, after consultations with Mr. Ioan Maxim, the Chairman of the forty-third session of the Sub-Commission, the Secretary-General had appointed Mr. José de Souza Martins (Brazil) and Mrs. Leslie Roberts (United Kingdom) to replace Mrs. Zamora Chavarria and Mr. Bonnet upon their resignation and extended the mandates of Mr. Swami Agnivesh (India), Mr. Cheikh Saad-Bouh Kamara (Mauritania) and Ms. Tatiana Matveeva (Russian Federation).

9. The Board of Trustees is therefore currently composed of the following five members for a three-year term (until 31 December 1998): Mr. Agnivesh, Ms. Matveeva, Ms. Roberts, Mr. Kamara and Mr. Martins.

10. The High Commissioner informed the members that the next session of the Board is scheduled from 17 to 21 March 1997 and that the Sub-Commission had invited a representative of the Fund to participate in the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery at its next session from 2 to 11 June 1997.

Appeal for contributions

11. On 10 December 1996, the High Commissioner sent a letter drawing the attention of Governments to the appeal by the Commission on Human Rights for contributions to the Fund, with a brief note describing the mandate, relevant resolutions and reports, provisions for the administration and management of the Fund, the composition of the Board of Trustees and the limited amount of money available for grants. The note was intended to publicize the establishment and functions of the Fund so as to increase general awareness of its existence among Governments. The note will also be used to inform donors, both public and private. In the same letter, the High Commissioner asked contributions to be paid, if possible, on an annual basis and prior to the meeting of the Board of Trustees - if possible by the end of February 1997 - indicating that early contributions would allow the Board to allocate funds at the very beginning of the year.

Management of the Fund and Board. Alignment and harmonization

12. The High Commissioner also sent to the members of the Board a letter explaining the process of restructuring of the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights. In this context, on 30 September 1996, a provisional team was established to manage five United Nations trust and voluntary funds in the field of human rights, specifically dealing with torture, indigenous people, slavery and racial discrimination. Therefore, all matters regarding the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery have been studied and carried out in line with those of the other trust funds in the field of human rights, keeping also in mind the above-mentioned invitation by the Commission on Human Rights to align and harmonize the procedures and support mechanisms of the Trust Fund with other existing procedures and mechanisms.

Contributions received. Balance available for grants

13. The Fund has received contributions from Chile (US$ 2,500), Kuwait (US$ 12,000), Morocco (US$ 2,316), the Netherlands (US$ 27,000) and Switzerland (US$ 15,152) (8 December 1994), as well as from an NGO, Action for Children Campaign (US$ 100), and a private person, Dr. Francalanci Buscioni (US$ 500) (28 September 1994). According to information available at the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights, it is estimated that the amount available for grants in 1997, US$ 27,524, might not be sufficient to allow the Board to make recommendations for travel grants to allow a few representatives of NGOs working in the field of contemporary forms of slavery to participate in the Working Group's session in May 1997, and/or to recommend a few other grants for NGO programmes to be developed in 1997.

How to contribute to the Fund:

Contributions to the Fund can be made by payment to:

The United Nations Geneva General Fund
c/o Swiss Bank Corporation
(Société de banque suisse, SBS)
P.O. Box 2770 CH 1211 Geneva 2

- in $US, Acc. CO - 590 - 160.1

- in CHF, Acc. CO - 590 - 160.0

Please mention:

"for the UN Voluntary Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery
Account S H B"

Contributions can also be made by check to the United Nations Cashier's Office
United Nations, New York, NY 10017, United States of America,

or United Nations, Palais des Nations, CH - 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

Please mention payment to the order of the "United Nations"